

REMARKS OF MAYOR PAUL D. FRAIM
SLOVER MEMORIAL LIBRARY GROUNDBREAKING
APRIL 26, 2012
AT 10:30 A.M.

Good morning . . . and thank you for joining us. Today's ceremonial groundbreaking marks the beginning of the construction phase for the Colonel Samuel L. Slover Memorial Main Library – a project that will be recorded as one of the most amazing in Norfolk's history.

With me on the platform this morning are Mrs. Jane Batten, wife of the late Frank Batten, Frank Batten, Jr., Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Landmark Media Enterprises, and Richard F. "Dick" Barry III, former vice chairman of Landmark Media Enterprises now serving as co-chair of The Batten Challenge.

Also with us are: Barclay Winn and Angelia Williams from the Norfolk City Council, City Manager Marcus Jones, Roz Brown, chair of the Norfolk Public Library Board of Trustees and members of the board, Norm Maas, director of Norfolk Public Libraries, Ray Gindroz of Urban Design Associates, Members of the Slover Advisory Committee, the Slover Foundation and the Batten Challenge Grant team. Representatives from the Norfolk Public Library Foundation and Friends of Norfolk Public Library, Newman Architects, and Kevin Swain and Chris Burns from the Walsh Group and Archer Western Contractors.

All have contributed to the work that brings us here today.

Long before light rail caused the demolition of Kirn Library, it was widely acknowledged the facility suffered from more problems than its inadequate size. Age, changing library practices and the advent of the digital era combined to render the venerable Kirn obsolete. At a minimum it needed extensive renovation. Better still - as we were told at more than one budget public hearing - what it really needed was replacing.

The community wanted a new central library, and so did the council, but significant obstacles stood in the way of an early replacement for Kirn. The City had pledged to build a long overdue new courthouse. Light rail was being built and paid for. And the City was building a new school – and planning to build more – we were building a new police precinct and a new aquatics center on the Southside along with other civic capital projects.

These represented major financial commitments on the Capital Improvement Program Budget. In 2007 the City did, however, purchase the Seaboard building for \$7.2 million dollars and invested another \$1.9 million to outfit it as an interim main library.

And that's where things stood until October 2008 when Mr. Frank Batten expressed interest in making a significant contribution towards building a new central library. The reason we are here today – in fact, the *only* reason we are here today - is because of the extraordinary generosity of Mr. Batten and the Batten family.

In the fall of 2008, Mr. Batten presented the City with a \$20 million gift for the design and construction of a new central library. It was the largest gift in the City's history and with the city's matching \$20 million dollar commitment, instantly made it possible to advance the timetable for replacing Kirn by at least 10 years, if not more.

Mr. Batten commented at the time: *"I take great pleasure and satisfaction in being able to provide this gift to the City of Norfolk. I am pleased the new central library will be named in honor of my uncle, Samuel Slover. Col. Slover was the founder of Landmark Communications and a former mayor. Col. Slover loved this city, and he believed that an informed citizenry is one of the most important keys to its success. Throughout my life and career, I have tried to honor my uncle and his devotion to the betterment of the communities we serve, and his commitment to integrity, honesty and a sense of fair play. He would be glad to know that this state-of-the-art library will be named in his honor."*

Immediately afterwards - in November 2008 – a committee was established to coordinate the project's many components and ensure the library would be designed to meet today's needs and to accommodate the evolving needs of the future.

The Slover Library Advisory Committee has been ably chaired by Mrs. Jane Batten. Its work has included selection of the architect as well as conducting an extensive, 6 month community outreach to obtain feedback on what our citizens wanted to see in the Slover Main Library. Through that process we learned people want this library to be a destination for the City and the region, that it must serve families and people of all ages, that it should be the region's center for history and genealogy, and – in keeping with Mr. Batten's wishes – that it incorporate the most advanced, innovative technology available.

We also learned the Slover Library, as originally proposed, was going to be too small to accommodate the needs identified by the community outreach. To achieve the community's vision, the Advisory Committee looked at expanding the new building upwards and outwards through creative use of space in the Selden Arcade. Additional funds were needed to accomplish this. In response, in January 2011 the Batten Foundation generously committed to a Challenge Grant to increase the total Batten family gift from \$20 million to \$40 million dollars.

Under the terms of the Challenge Grant, the Batten Foundation's full match would be achieved once a minimum of \$4 million dollars in additional contributions and pledges was received from private entities and individuals. Additional funding from the City would not qualify for the match.

I'm very pleased to say that within months, that amount was achieved and then exceeded. The Batten Foundation has transmitted the additional \$20 million dollars to the City . . . and I ask you to join me in expressing thanks on behalf of a grateful community to Jane Batten and Frank Batten, Jr. for their commitment not just to the Slover Library but to the City of Norfolk and its citizens. (Lead Applause)

There is now a fundraising effort underway to establish a \$10 million endowment for technology upgrades, and we'll hear more about that in just a minute.

The Slover Memorial Main Library will, upon completion, be a national model for architectural design and, in accordance with Mr. Batten's wishes, it will also be a library built for the future by incorporating the most advanced technology. Occupying the space between the Renaissance Revival architecture of the former U.S. Courthouse and Post Office and the Art Deco architecture of the Selden Arcade – both on the National and State Registers of Historic Places - will be a modern building of glass and steel connected to each and symbolizing respect for the City's past and its aspirations for the future. Features of the new building include a forum for public gatherings and events, a rooftop terrace, a glass "showcase" and public meeting space. It will, in fact, be a center of culture and learning.

Across the country people are using their libraries in record numbers, a phenomenon we've witnessed first-hand with the Pretlow Anchor Branch library ever since it opened four years ago. As society embraced the digital world as a preferred way to access and exchange information, and as millions have embraced social media as a primary method of communication, libraries have also changed and adapted to reflect this new landscape.

Their traditional role as a monastery of peace and quiet for the pursuit of scholastic research and reflection has expanded to incorporate high technology, and to serve the more boisterous role of community forum where ideas are exchanged face-to-face and where learning occurs in an interactive environment. I can promise you, the Slover Library is going to be a place where young and old alike will feel welcomed. It will be a regional destination, alive with activity, it will offer new ways to explore the world through use of cutting edge technology, and it will be a regional research center for Hampton Roads history and genealogy.

A moment ago I mentioned one of the Advisory Committee's activities was selecting an architect. This was a critical task. The project required a firm that could combine the historic integrity of the Seaboard building and the Selden Arcade with a new structure. It also required a firm with extensive experience in historic restoration.

After a series of intense interviews, the Committee selected Newman Architects of New Haven, Connecticut. Founded by Herbert Newman in 1964, the firm has a national reputation for the design of new buildings and the renovation and restoration of existing buildings. Mr. Newman himself is a fellow of the American Institute of Architects . . . he has received numerous awards for his work including the Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Architecture, and he leads the creative team designing the Slover Memorial Library.

The project also required a contractor experienced in new construction as well as in the renovation of older buildings. The firm that was selected – Archer Western Contractors – is currently ranked among the nation's Top 20 Contractors. It is part of the Walsh Group, a construction firm founded in 1898, and specializes in design-build construction.

The team that has been assembled around this project is world class, and causes us to look forward with great anticipation and excitement to the day a little more than two years from now when we'll cut the ribbon on the Col. Samuel L. Slover Memorial Main Library. So thank

you, again, for being here to share in this moment, and thanks also to the Batten family all it has done for Norfolk and its people.

It is now my pleasure to call to the podium Frank Batten, Jr., chairman and chief executive officer of Landmark Media Enterprises. He will be followed by Dick Barry, former vice chairman with Landmark Media Enterprises and co-chair of The Batten Challenge.

Frank Batten, Jr. speaks

Dick Barry speaks

Thank you. And now, I want to invite Mrs. Batten, Frank, Dick, members of city council, the city manager, Roz Brown, Norm Maas and the co-chairs of The Batten Challenge to join me down front for the ceremonial groundbreaking.

Following the groundbreaking please join us for a reception in the Seaboard building where you can view a model and renderings of the Col. Samuel L. Slover Memorial Main Library.